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Defectors: The 'fifth man' is here

■ The Central Intelligence Agency faced twin challenges in late January: Keeping secret the existence of a fifth high-ranking Soviet-bloc intelligence agent who defected in 1985 and staving off a drive to strip the CIA of the duty of caring for defectors.

In addition to the four spies that the government acknowledges fled to the West, a KGB major general—the highest ranking defector of them all—was brought to the U.S. last year, well-informed American intelligence sources told *U.S. News & World Report*.

The CIA, stung by last November's redefection to Moscow of KGB Col. Vitaly Yurchenko, is working behind the scenes to ward off charges that it has bungled its role as provider and friend to defectors. The White House is considering a plan to give the job to a rival, the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The CIA refused as a matter of policy to comment on the latest disclosed defection, and the Kremlin has never acknowledged it.

"Extremely valuable" is how one source termed the Soviet officer, who was feeding secrets to the U.S. even before he defected. The major general, a professional with technical expertise, is described as a middle-age Russian who often traveled to Soviet-bloc countries. He was smuggled out of East Germany in late April or early May by helicopter and debriefed at a U.S. base in West Germany. He was hidden to prevent press leaks that might have upstaged the Geneva summit in November. After the summit, he was flown to the U.S. and, because of the Yurchenko fiasco, settled in the Midwest.

Yurchenko left his CIA handler behind in a Washington restaurant and went to the Soviet Embassy to redefect.

The newly revealed defector is said to be unlike Yurchenko, who seemed erratic. The CIA's prize is termed a "strong and steady" personality. One CIA agent called him a "top-notch guy."

The "fifth man" was among the earliest, if not the first, of 1985's defectors. Milan Svec, No. 2 officer at the Czechoslovak Embassy in Washington, defected on May 14; Sergei Bokhan, first secretary at the Soviet Embassy in Athens, went over to the West on May 25; Oleg Gordievsky, KGB station chief in London, changed sides in July or August,



Vitaly Yurchenko

and Yurchenko defected in Rome in July.

Although those four became known, U.S. authorities kept the fifth secret. His disclosure now carries no apparent national-security risk, but it may deepen the CIA's woes. For one thing, the major general wants to remain anonymous—and is being given a new identity. Also, the CIA has clamped down on any talk of defectors, partly from fear of another Yurchenko case and partly to quiet critics who say it

can't keep a secret.

Harsh criticism of the agency came from the Jamestown Foundation, a private group set up to work with high-level defectors. After the Yurchenko affair, it was asked by the White House to assess CIA defector practices.

Jamestown said most defectors it spoke to complained that they were assigned to "low-level, insensitive, untrained, frequently rotated officers who did not speak their language. . . . Some say the treatment was so bad that they considered suicide" or redefection.

Senator Malcolm Wallop (R-Wyo.), a former Intelligence Committee member, said the CIA shows "repetitious ham-handedness," adding that "after the CIA debriefs a defector, he shouldn't be dropped into a hole."

A tour of duty resettling

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defectors is not likely to advance a CIA agent's career, the Jamestown report said. By contrast, defectors speak highly of FBI agents, who are seen as unpretentious, friendly and sensitive, according to the study.

The fear is that shoddy treatment of Yurchenko and others may discourage Eastern officials from fleeing. The foundation's No. 1 proposal is to create an interagency team led by the FBI rather than the CIA to resettle defectors.

"I'm not sure yet which would be the better agency," said Vice Chairman Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) of the Senate Intelligence Committee. "I've asked for a thorough review of Yurchenko, and also one other defector that has not been made public, to get a better view."

Other foundation recommendations:

- The U.S. guarantee defectors incomes equivalent to the government's GS-11 salary—ranging from \$26,381 to \$34,292—so that money worries don't add to the strain of abandoning home.
- The law be changed so that defectors can become U.S. citizens in two years, rather than the current five to 10.
- An institute staffed by defector scholars be set up as a pool of "ideas and insights" about the Soviet bloc.

Wallop, who backs the proposals, said: "Defectors have much to offer and their experiences should be shared in the classroom, on the speech circuit. They should serve as useful beacons for future defectors." ■



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